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To: Shawn Petri, Superintendent

From: Katie Keith, Director of Early Childhood

Date: July 2026

Subject: Early Childhood Update

COOR Community and Family Connection (formerly Great Start Collaborative)

COOR Community and Family Connection:

The 2026 Oscoda County Project Connect was successfully held on June 11, 2026, at Mio AuSable Schools. The event brought together community organizations, service providers, and local partners to connect individuals and families with valuable resources and support available throughout Oscoda County and the surrounding area.

The event featured:

- 35 provider booths located inside the school gymnasium
- 2 outdoor provider booths
- A food truck distribution
- Distribution of personal hygiene products
- A Police K-9 demonstration for families and children

A total of **90 households registered**, representing **266 household members served** during the event. COOR Community and Family Connection participates on the planning committee each year, helping to coordinate, promote, and support the event to ensure families and community members are aware of available resources and opportunities.





The 2026 Crawford Neighborhood Connect was held on June 18, 2026, at Grayling High School. The event, organized by Tammy and Chris, brought together local service providers, community organizations, and families to increase awareness of available resources and strengthen connections to services that support the health and well-being of Crawford County residents.

The event featured:

- 31 provider booths located within the school gymnasium
- Car seat safety checks for families with young children
- A food truck distribution
- Distribution of personal hygiene products

A total of **126 participants registered** and attended the event, taking advantage of the many resources and services available.



Great Start to Quality

NE Great Start to Quality received information for the RFP to bid to continue our work that we do with child care providers. We submitted our letter of intent and will be working on completing the RFP application throughout July.

We have been working hard to engage child care providers who have not been participating with us to use our free quality improvement coaching services. When a program works with us and increases their quality level by meeting the quality indicators found in the Self-Reflection, they can potentially earn more money per child/per hour for their program to use in whatever ways benefit the staff/children/facility/families. These extra dollars would be from the CDC scholarships for families that meet the qualifications for that program.

Melissa Maeder, our Quality Improvement Specialist, has been mailing out letters to programs who have children on their roster that receive these scholarship funds from the state. She is targeting the programs who have never participated with us in the past to mail out these letters. In the letter, she explains how they could be making more money per child by simply meeting some of the quality indicators in our system and earning a higher quality level. She then offers her services to help them get there. She just started mailing these letters out in June and already has started meeting with one program in Ogemaw County and there are a few more that she is anticipating to hear from. It is these creative ideas that makes our NE region stand out within the state for our strong relationships with our providers, which results in them voluntarily participating in our program. We have the highest participation rate of any of the regions in the state. We currently have 73% of our providers participating with us. The goal that ECIC has set for all of the 10 Great Start to Quality regions is 60%. To see what the Self-Reflection contains to indicate quality of our child care programs, click here:

 [Great Start to Quality Program Quality Indictors Guidance Document](#)



Helen Shastal, Kym Narayana, and Salena Laskowski all attended the Spreading Hope training in Gaylord. We work with child care providers who, themselves and some of the families and children they serve, may have experienced trauma or have a high ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) score. [Read about ACES here](#) . Spreading Hope (Healthy outcomes from Positive Experiences) is a framework that helps buffer trauma and give support to understand how to offset trauma. We will be bringing this information to child care providers to emphasize the importance of the relationships, communication, support, and guidance

to build healthy brains and relationships to help children be successful in regulating emotions and being able to bounce back when times are tough. For more information: [Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences](#)

Great Start Readiness Program

Current Enrollment: 239 children enrolled with 149 spots open

We are patiently waiting for the state budget to be signed so we can proceed with budgets for the 2026-27 school year. There is still plenty to work on for 2026-27. The summer will be devoted to developing and updating professional development for staff for the 2026-27 school year. We are excited to be offering more opportunities for staff.